



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

and Italy, and the Indian seas. It is possible that in some places where we find traces of early works of man, the climate may have been very different to what it is now, but the present stone period does not allow the use of that evasion. It leads us to look upon improvements in civilisation as something arbitrary, due to some accident of genius or inspiration in some man or race of men, from whom, when once lit, the torch has been sped from hand to hand; this torchlight representing what we are apt to consider the world's real history, those who have it not groping their way on feebly to better things, while those who have it have leapt on exultingly by mightier and ever mightier leaps to unforeseen and un hoped for victories over the mysteries of nature.

RATIONALISM.*

MR. LECKY'S book on the *History of Rationalism* has very unfairly been compared to that of Buckle on the *History of Civilisation*. Unfairly to both parties. For in the latter we have the elaborate result of many years spent in digesting the most ample materials, and the enunciation of a leading principle, which, though by no means new, has never been applied before to the history of mankind with such industry or such convincing arguments for its substantial correctness. Our present subject is the performance of a comparatively young man, a series of detached essays, the aim and object of which it is almost impossible to discover, or perhaps we ought rather to say is so much overlaid with digressions, and so continually lost sight of by the author, that the reader may frequently well doubt whether his mind was really made up on the chief point in question, or whether he was only trying to find sufficient grounds for its enunciation.

The spirit of Rationalism is clearly enough defined in the introduction as—

“Not being any class of definite doctrines or criticisms, but rather a certain cast of thought, or bias of reasoning, which has during the last three centuries gained a marked ascendancy in Europe. It leads men on all occasions to subordinate dogmatic theology to the dictates of reason and of conscience, and as a necessary consequence, greatly to restrict its influence upon life. It predisposes men, in history, to attribute all kinds of phenomena to natural rather than miraculous causes; in theology, to esteem succeeding systems the expressions of

* History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Pationalism in Europe. By W. E. H. Lecky, M.A. 2 vols. Longmans: 1865.

the wants and aspirations of that religious sentiment which is planted in all men ; and in ethics, to regard as duties only those which conscience reveals to be such."

The design of giving the history of this spirit is a grand one, but as we have hinted, cannot be said to be more than attempted by Mr. Lecky.

Its effects in theology and in ethics are scarcely touched on ; though the supplementary verifications of the doctrine afforded by an analysis of the results of modern political and industrial theories are carried out at some length. The religious theories of the author will satisfy neither those who look upon Christianity as of natural origin, and of imperfect ethics ; nor those who consider some portion at all events of its dogmas as not less important than its precepts of universal benevolence.

That succeeding systems of religion have been developed from each other, and that the first system was fetishism is seen very clearly. The sign of the cross is a decided fetish.

"It was adopted not simply as a form of recognition or as a holy recollection, or even as a mark of reverence, but as a weapon of miraculous power ; and the writings of the fathers are crowded with the prodigies it performed, and also with the many types and images that adumbrated its glory. So also with water ; and it may be questioned whether that form of fetishism which rejoices in the use of amulets was ever more prominent in paganism than in mediæval Christianity."

The anthropomorphic phase of Christianity is then noted, but the chain of reasoning is completely broken by a learned dissertation on Christian and religious art, which at last gives place to what is the best and most interesting portion of the book, viz., an account of the antagonism of theology to science, the rise and fall of persecution, and the permanent establishment of the great principles of toleration.

Some notice has been taken in the *Memoirs of the Anthropological Society* of the anthropological views of the early Christians. The opinions there expressed of their extreme hostility to scientific truth receive here fresh confirmation. We read of an old monk named Cosmas, who lived in the reign of Justinian, and who from the time he had embraced a religious life devoted himself zealously to the relations between scripture and science. Though suffering from "a certain dryness both of the eyes and of the stomach," he resolved to employ the remainder of his life in the composition of a great work, which was not only to refute the 'anile fable' of the Antipodes, but was to form a complete system of the universe, based upon the teaching of revelation.

This precious composition was entitled *Topographia Christiana*,

and was defined as "a Christian topography of the universe, established by demonstrations from Divine Scripture, concerning which *it is not lawful for a Christian to doubt*. It is easy to imagine how, starting with this excellent axiom, the world is represented as a flat plane, of which the measurements are tolerably well known. Day and night are accounted for with equal sagacity. The sacred writers cannot, of course, be mistaken even in a word or letter, so that we need not be surprised to find, at last, that 'a Christian should not even speak of the Antipodes.'

"It is indeed marvellous that science should ever have revived amid the fearful obstacles theologians cast in her way. Together with a system of biblical interpretation so stringent, and at the same time so capricious, that it infallibly came into collision with every discovery that was not in accordance with the unaided judgment of the senses, and therefore with the familiar expressions of the Jewish writers, everything was done to cultivate a habit of thought the direct opposite of the habits of science. The constant exaltation of blind faith, the countless miracles, the childish legends, all produced a condition of besotted ignorance, of grovelling and trembling credulity that can scarcely be paralleled except among the most degraded barbarians. Innovation of every kind was regarded as a crime : superior knowledge excited only terror and suspicion. If it was shown in speculation, it was called heresy. If it was shown in the study of nature, it was called magic. The dignity of the Popedom was unable to save Gerbert from the reputation of a magician, and the magnificent labours of Roger Bacon were repaid by fourteen years imprisonment, and many others of less severe but unremitting persecution. A theological system lay like an incubus upon Christendom, and to its influence, more than to any other single cause, the universal paralysis is to be ascribed."

How the discovery of the New World and the labours of Copernicus and Galileo proved at last too strong for such deep-rooted superstition is an oft-told story, which will however bear to be read as here set forth even once more ; but with all these merits we cannot think that Rationalism has altogether been properly represented. A history of Rationalism should comprise not only the verifications to be deduced from the irresistible logic of facts which have really taken place, but also a clear conception of the rules of evidence, which are always followed by mankind in matters as to which they have no prejudice, and which force themselves into notice occasionally even under the most disadvantageous circumstances. Isolated passages of considerable ability tantalise the reader, or shall we say give us hope that the writer may one day produce something worthy of his industry and his powers. To remind us what persecution has been is sometimes a good thing, but no one can expect to rival the wit or invectives of Voltaire. Still, when the Church would have us believe that it has

lost not only the power but the wish to coerce, it will bear reminding that if—

“ ‘See how these Christians love one another,’ was the just and striking exclamation of the heathen in the first century, ‘There are no wild beasts so ferocious as Christians who differ concerning their faith,’ was the equally striking and probably equally just exclamation of the heathen in the fourth century. And the reason of this difference is manifest. In the first century there was, properly speaking, scarcely any theology, no system of elaborate dogmas authoritatively imposed upon the conscience. But in the fourth century men were mainly occupied with innumerable subtle and minute questions of theology, to which they attributed a transcendent importance, and which in a great measure diverted their minds from moral considerations.

“That the Church of Rome has shed more innocent blood than any other institution that has ever existed among mankind, will be questioned by no Protestant who has a competent knowledge of history. . . . When we add together all these various forms of suffering, and estimate all their aggravations; when we think that the victims of these persecutions were usually men who were not only entirely guiltless, but who proved themselves by their very deaths to be endowed with most transcendent and heroic virtues, and when we still further consider that all this was but part of one vast conspiracy to check the development of the human mind, and to destroy that spirit of impartial and unrestricted inquiry which all modern researches prove to be the very first condition of progress as of truth; when we consider all these things, it can surely be no exaggeration to say that the Church of Rome has inflicted a greater amount of unmerited suffering than any other religion that has ever existed among mankind.

“Nor is this true only of the Roman Catholics. For when Descartes went to Holland, the reformed clergy directed against him all the force of their animosity, and the accusation by which they endeavoured to stir up the civil power against the author of the most sublime of all modern proofs of the existence of the Deity, was atheism. And some good people in Sweden desired to have Linnæus’s system of botany suppressed, because it was based upon the discovery of the sexes of the plants, and was therefore calculated to inflame the minds of youth.”

Persecution, however, was only one method by which Christian principles opposed themselves to the spirit of rationalism. Whether we read of the secularisation of politics, or of sound reasoning as applied to every form of industrialism, it is the clergy who stand forth as the inveterate enemies of either. The action of the church meets us at every page in these suggestive volumes; now as the judge, if not the creator, of magic and witchcraft; now the opponent of astronomy, of geology, and finally of anthropology; now, again, the director of every species of torture and persecution, its chief organs asserting that to see the tortures of the damned will be one of

the greatest pleasures of the elect, so that, according to an Anglican divine, "the hell described in the Gospel is not with the same particularity to be met with in any other religion that is or hath been in the whole world." And the same benevolent person, whose science appears to have been on a par with his religion, strenuously contended that the locality of this same hell was in the sun. The Christian doctrine of usury was not less hostile against enabling a man to do what he would with his own; and the orthodox doctrine that it was not necessary, or even proper, to keep faith with heretics, has perhaps been the most efficacious barrier to what is asserted to be one of the objects of Christianity, namely, peace and goodwill to all mankind.

It is customary now with a certain class of writers, who occupy towards morality much the same position that the "reconcilers" do towards science, to assert that all these exhibitions of hostility to the progress of mankind are quite alien to true Christianity, and should all be put down to the inevitable action of that powerful corporation which is called the Church. That the Church is an institution quite different from Christianity we are ready to admit; for it was in existence, in some shape or other, wherever a body of priests or intellectual rulers had at any time in the career of man come to a common understanding. Other men had laboured, and the Christians came into their labours. The temples and the temple lands were always, and not unjustly, the property of the dominant religion, whatever that might be. In every case it was the Church. But when the Church became Christian, it is idle to say that it did not represent the doctrines of that religion. To say that everything that it did that was right was Christian, and everything that was wrong was not Christian, is clearly absurd; for a similar process of reasoning, or rather assertion, can be made use of in defence of any superstition. To say that in essentials it has always been the same is only in a degree, not in kind, less offensive to facts; for still the question arises, what are its essentials? a question which has been very far from being answered always in the same way.

No doctrine can be more emphatically Christian than that of everlasting damnation. But even this has been recently pronounced as no longer legally the necessary teaching of English Christianity. The same authority would have full power to banish all the distinctive dogmas of our religion from the national church. And the national church it would still remain, even though it should cease to be Christian. But when the church ceases to be Christian, who can suppose that Christianity can survive that separation? When the revenues now applied to the service of dogma are handed over to those en-

gaged in the service and search of truth, wherever it is to be found, and whatever it may turn out to be, who imagines that the parting genius which will give place with sighing can long survive? or that the altar will be left standing when the priest ceases to live by it?

To assert that the church is of divine origin, and is destined to stand for ever, and yet to point out with most elaborate detail that it has always been the foremost energy in opposition to truth, and has caused more bloodshed and injustice than any other power ever known, is only on a par with the reasoning which professes to believe that the Bible is inspired, and yet is invariably wrong whenever it attempts to explain or describe the operations of nature or the history of mankind. But to look upon the church as a great engine of education, the possession of which has always hitherto fallen into the hands of men who have never sought truth for its own sake, but only as the means of obtaining power, or at the very best of securing what is called salvation in another world, is compatible with looking upon it as a most powerful machine which has hitherto been always in the keeping of unworthy hands, and with a hope that the days are fast approaching when the secularisation of the church will form the last and most important chapter in the history of rationalism.

Not that such a result can be expected without a struggle. But up to the present moment, no one can tell on what point the final contest will take place. Could, indeed, the upholders of dogmatic Christianity be but compelled to join issue on some, or even one, definite question, the spirit of rationalism and of truth would know well how to arm its votaries for the battle. And as the science of mankind advances, such an issue must one day present itself. It was not till 400 years after his birth that the solemn question was put to the Roman senate, *Shall Christ or Jupiter be the god of the empire?* We all know what was then the verdict, assisted as it was by the presence of the emperor. A still more solemn question will shortly be brought before a still more august tribunal—Shall we be governed by the love of truth for its own sake, or by the doctrines of a failing superstition?

No one can doubt for a moment what answer that question, when once fairly put, will receive. But the important thing to bear in mind is, that it will not be a church which will support the cause of superstition, but a system of theology. A church is susceptible of every variation and of all possible development, but a theology which cannot stand the analysis of rationalism will endeavour to involve everything in its death-throes. We doubt not, however, that such egotistical efforts will be all in vain. The gradual abolition, not only of all religious tests, but of all inquiry into the religious opinions of others: the removal of every qualification, except those of willingness

and capacity from all offices now held by either the teacher or the priest up to that of the highest spiritual office in the land; the opening of our temples to the preaching of natural religion and the principles of morality as tested by experience; and the conversion of our museums and galleries into real temples of nature and of truth, will all precede the final decree which must for ever shut the mouth of self-seeking and exclusive superstition.

"Sooner or later the spirit of truth will be regarded in Christendom, as it was regarded by the philosophers of ancient Greece, as the loftiest form of virtue. A love of truth that seriously resolves to spare no prejudice and accord no favour, that prides itself on basing every conclusion on reason or conscience, and in rejecting every illegitimate influence, is not common in one sex, is almost unknown in the other, and is very far indeed from being the actuating spirit of all who boast most loudly of their freedom from prejudice. But there probably never before was a period, since the triumph of Christianity, when men were judged so little according to their belief, and when history, and even ecclesiastical history, was written with such earnest, such scrupulous impartiality. In the social sphere, although the amalgamation of different religious communities is still very imperfect, and although a change of religion by one member of a family not unfrequently produces a rupture, and causes a vast amount of the more petty forms of persecution, the improvement has been rapid and profound. . . . Already under the same influences, education at the universities has in a great measure lost its old exclusive character; and members of different creeds having been admitted within their pale, men are brought in contact with representatives of more than one class of opinions at a time when they are finally deciding what class of opinions they will embrace."

This is rather theory than what actually happens at college; but the next paragraphs are well worth meditation.

"There cannot, I think, be much doubt that the same movement must eventually modify profoundly the earlier stages of education. If our private judgment is the sole rule by which we should form our opinions, it is obviously the duty of the educator to render that judgment as powerful, and at the same time to preserve it as unbiased as possible. To impose an elaborate system of prejudices on the yet undeveloped mind, and to entwine those prejudices with all the most hallowed associations of childhood, is most certainly contrary to the spirit of the doctrine of private judgment.

"Of the few who have obtained a glimpse of higher things, a large proportion cannot endure a conflict to which old associations, and, above all, the old doctrine of the guilt of error, lends such a peculiar bitterness; they stifle the voice of reason, they turn away from the path of knowledge, they purchase peace at the expense of truth. This is, indeed, in our day, the most fatal of all the obstacles to inquiry. Dissolution must precede formation. There is a period in the history of the inquirer when old opinions have been shaken or

destroyed, and new opinions have not yet been formed, a period of doubt, of terror, and of darkness, when the voice of the dogmatist has not lost its power, and the phantoms of the past still hover over the mind. It is in this season of transition that the temptations to stifle reason possess a fearful power. It is when contrasting the tranquillity of past assurance with the feverish paroxysms that accompany inquiry, that the mind is most likely to abandon the path of truth. It is so much easier to assume than to prove; it is so much less painful to believe than to doubt; there is such a charm in the repose of prejudice, when no discordant voice jars upon the harmony of belief; there is such a thrilling pang when cherished dreams are scattered, and old creeds abandoned, that it is not surprising that men should close their eyes to the unwelcome light. Hence the tenacity exhibited by systems that have long since been disproved. Hence the oscillation and timidity that characterise the research of most, and the indifference to truth and the worship of expediency that cloud the fair promise of not a few. . . . He who, believing that the search for truth can never be offensive to the God of truth, pursues his way with an unswerving energy, may not unreasonably hope that he may assist others in their struggle towards the light, and may in some small degree contribute to that consummation when the professed belief shall have been adjusted to the requirements of the age, when the old tyranny shall have been broken, and the anarchy of transition shall have passed away."

PREHISTORIC ANNALS OF SCOTLAND.*

THE annals of a country are the facts which successive generations have left on record of their origin, growth, and progress. Setting aside all that is legendary and fabulous, we may state that the facts are strictly of two kinds; those which are written on perishable materials, and those which are engraved, as it were, on the more durable monuments of stone and metal, hidden it may be within the bosom of the earth. The former are easily decyphered, and the writers being contemporary with the events they record, their statements are accepted on authority, and justly assume the name of history; whilst the latter, obscure in language, dark in symbolism, and without an interpreter, stand outside the sacred pale, and are condemned to the regions of the unknown. But the advance of science, continually enlarging the bounds of knowledge, reclaims from time to time portions of this *terra incognita*, and raises thereupon structures which history

* Prehistoric Annals of Scotland. By Daniel Wilson, LL.D. 2 vols. 2nd edition. Plates and Woodcuts. Macmillan: 1865.